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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
Rural Electrification Administration
Washington 25, D. C.

January 13, 1949

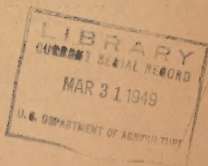
To : All REA Employees

From : Administrator

Subject: Action on Departmental Suggestions - First Report

Our employees here in Washington offered many valuable suggestions at the staff conference held during the week of August 23. These suggestions are being given serious consideration and already several have been adopted. Attached is the first report of action taken on those suggestions which have been considered to date. Subsequent reports will be made as your suggestions are evaluated.

Claude P. Wickard



Inclusion of Cost Estimates on Form MA-107, Requests for Purchase (ASD-1)

To facilitate processing of purchase orders, signers of Requests for Purchase are requested to determine the approximate cost of their orders and include such information on the Request.

Travel requests do not always reach the Travel Section before the traveler has started his journey. This is often caused by the delay in the signed requests reaching the Travel Section from the Administrator's Office. (ASD-4)

Supervisors are reminded that the requests for travel must be prepared in sufficient time to allow the requests to be approved by the Administrator's office and then forwarded to the Travel Unit prior to the date the travel is to commence. Five days should be allowed to permit ample time for this approval to be obtained.

It is suggested that travelers make themselves more familiar with the administrative memoranda issued. (ASD-5)

Travelers are urged to become more familiar with memoranda pertaining to travel. Memoranda are the primary means of keeping the travelers informed of any changes in procedures or regulations which may affect them.

A fieldman's time and attendance report should be signed by his supervisor and not by his supervisor's secretary with her initials. This is not acceptable to the General Accounting Office. (ASD-6)

Time and attendance reports must be signed by the supervisor or in his absence by the person designated in charge of the office.

Incomplete requisitions sent to the Property Accountability Unit cause great delays as an employee in that office must finish each one. Each requisition should have the complete stock order number as well as the description of the article ordered. Full instructions are given on the back of the Form AD-14. To receive credit for any article returned to Central Supply, it is necessary to have the original requisition. (ASD-10)

This suggestion requires little elaboration. All members of the staff who are engaged in requisitioning supplies are requested to complete the requisitions in conformance with the instructions detailed on the reverse of Form AD-14. This will assure the receipt of the specific items required and reduce the unnecessary burden incurred by the Property Accountability Unit.

REA has only two employees to move furniture. It is impossible for them to handle promptly the great volume of calls received. (ASD-11)

Due to the fact that only two employees are available for our labor force, requests for labor assistance should be made as far in advance as possible to permit scheduling labor for maximum effectiveness.

It is requested that the divisions check with Central Records to see if space is available before sending bulk records to be filed. (ASD-15)

Since considerable rearrangement of space is often required to accommodate bulk records, each person responsible for files is requested to secure prior approval from the Central Records Unit before delivering bulk records for filing and storing.

The Mail Unit is expected to provide drivers to transport typewriters to Civil Service Commission for typist examinations. Only two men are qualified to drive Government vehicles - one handles the Administrator's mail and the other is the outside messenger and very seldom available. No other agency provides this service. (ASD-22)

Although this practice involves a certain expense, we believe that it is a service that should be available to our employees.

It is requested that when many carbon copies are made which include figures for the Statistical Services Section and the Production Control Section, clear copies are transmitted to these sections so that there will be less chance of errors in working from these copies. (ASD-2)

The suggestion with respect to legible carbon copies affects not only the sections mentioned, but also each office in which figures are used. It is obvious that poor carbon copies lead to a decreased efficiency and productivity. Supervisors are urged to plan the distribution of copies in such a manner that illegible carbons will not be released. The use of good carbons and use of tissue weight paper for the original will also help this problem.

When planning field conferences, bulk mailing should be considered and plans made to send it by regular mail in time to reach its destination. Now packages weighing 10 or 15 pounds have to be sent air mail which is very costly. (ASD-21)

In the interest of economy, every employee is expected and urged to use the lowest cost type of communication that will serve the purpose. Telephone, telegraph, and air mail are more expensive than regular mail and should be used only when regular mail will not meet the needs of the situation.

Since 90% of the correspondence filed by Central Records Unit is filed by project number, it is important that the project designation of cooperatives be put on each outgoing letter. If all cooperatives could be persuaded to have the designation on their letterhead, it would save a lot of time in the Communications and Records Management Section in the handling of incoming mail. (ASD-14)

Since borrower designations were established by REA primarily for its own use, it is questionable whether borrowers should be expected to make such designations a part of the letterhead on their stationery. It is important that we put the designation on all outgoing letters to facilitate reference and filing. On incoming correspondence, not bearing a designation, it is the responsibility of the office receiving the letter to write the designation on the letter before it is sent to the files. All employees are urged to follow this practice.

It is recommended that office engineers be relieved of all clerical duties. (Eng.-2)

The CAF positions recently established in the Engineering Division were designed to meet this particular problem.

Some of the calls coming from the Administrator's Office could be answered from that office by referring to previous calls on the same subject. Lots of times, calls are made within a few days' time on the same subject. (A & L-13)

This type of situation does not occur too frequently. However, time is saved for the organization by calling back the divisional office responsible for having the complete records rather than attempting to maintain in the Administrator's Office a duplicate set of records.

Suggested that forms on which several copies have to be made, these forms should be printed on very thin paper so that only one run need be made (A & L-3)

This practice is being followed wherever divisions indicate the need for thin paper. There are some printing limitations but the thinnest paper available will be used when divisional requisitions for duplication call for it. For example, the revised form for field representatives (ADM-36) was printed on thin paper to permit better copies.

Reclassification of the Loan Accounts jobs. (Fin.-12)

This situation has been corrected.

Upgrading Finance Division positions to the level of other three line divisions. (Fin.-15)

A survey of the positions in the Finance Division will be made upon the completion of a specifications survey for Accounting positions now being carried on by the Civil Service Commission.

Need for scheduling release of information concerning loans. (ISD+2)

The new loan procedure which became effective October 18 provides for a definite scheduling procedure for announcing new loans. The schedule provides for a regular release of information concerning loans at 11:30 a.m. each day for loans approved up to 10:00 a.m. of the same day and not previously announced. At that time, the borrower, congressional offices, and the press are simultaneously informed of the loan. This arrangement provides a uniform procedure and it is believed removes the objections and difficulties experienced by the Information Services Division under the former procedure.

We feel that the Administrator's Office should be in the same building with the rest of REA. This would save a lot of time spent in walking back and forth from one building to the other. It would save time on the part of messengers and those making mail deliveries. (ISD-10)

Generally, it would be desirable to have all REA offices as close to each other as possible. However, it has been found that the advantages to REA of having the Administrator's Office in the Administration Building outweigh the disadvantages.

That efforts be made for all divisions to adhere to standard procedure of handling minutes; namely, (a) that minutes are routed first to regional office, Management Division; (b) that all minutes be transmitted to all to whom indicated on routing sheet attached thereto before being returned to the Management Division; (c) that all people to whom the minutes are routed shall be instructed to initial and date. (Mgt.-7)

This suggestion is an excellent reminder that all of us should follow established procedures to achieve best operating results.

Suggested that mail be answered promptly instead of holding for a month or two and then answering all of it at once. This not only takes a lot of time of the dictator and stenographer but does not help public relations. (A & L-6)

Under no circumstances are replies to incoming mail to be withheld until an accumulation can be taken care of at one time. Each incoming communication must be acted upon promptly. Our borrowers and other correspondents have every right to expect prompt replies to their communications.

Routing of mail was discussed. (A & L-5)

The routing of mail within REA has recently been reviewed and has been found to be generally satisfactory. However, if anyone has suggestions for improving the routing of mail he should submit them to the Suggestion Awards Committee.

Exchange of information between division sections. There should be more exchanges of information between sections of the division as to what each section is doing. This would insure better coordination of work. Tech. Stds.-2)

In reference to this suggestion, the Chief of the Technical Standards Division informs me that the practice of having each section describe its work to the entire division at regular staff conferences will be repeated once or twice each year. In addition, oral reports will be made at staff conferences by divisional representatives with reference to their field assignments, and all technical reports prepared in the sections will be circulated throughout the division.

Technical Standards Committee "A": Members are notified in advance of the items to be considered at weekly meetings. Quite often the members do not study the material over in advance nor do they get the opinions of the experts in their division on the subject as should be done. When members come to the meeting unprepared they are unable to properly judge an item. (Tech. Stds.-6)

Every committee member is urged to obtain all information possible from his division on agenda items prior to committee meetings in order that consideration of the items may be expedited.

File copies of letters not available for several days after clearing division office. (Power-2)

File copies of outgoing letters are returned immediately to the division concerned after clearing the Mail Review Unit. The file copy is then forwarded to the section or unit for filing. Each employee who handles file copies should bear in mind the importance of getting such copies into the file cabinets as quickly as possible.

That weekly meetings of office managers be revived to effect further standardization of procedures used in regional offices and that such meetings be continued aggressively. (Mgt.-6)

As the result of this suggestion, the meetings have been resumed.

Recommended that Messrs. Overby, Walters, Ingram, and Rall study the material now being circulated to select that of interest to the staff and to eliminate unnecessary material. (ISD-1)

This recommendation has been put into effect.

It was requested that all persons submitting material to secretaries for copying or filing, identify each piece. This identification would include the subject, purpose (speech or article), and the name of the person for whom it was written. (ISD-11)

This recommendation has been put into effect.

When divisions wish travel request books sent to fieldmen air mail, it is important that they be in the Travel Unit in time to be issued and picked up in the last mail delivery at 4:30 p.m. or they will not go out until the next day. (ASD-3)

Division representatives are urged to get their requests to the Travel Unit prior to 3:45 p.m. if it is essential that Travel Request books be mailed the same day.

Travelers frequently wait a month or more before submitting a voucher and then complain about the delay in receiving reimbursement. Vouchers are worked in the order in which they are received. (ASD-6)

When travelers do not submit their vouchers promptly they may expect delay in receiving payment. In fairness to all, the policy of processing vouchers on the "first-in," "first-out" basis will prevail.

REA gets about 1,000 sets of minutes of co-op board and members' meetings each month. These minutes are routed by routing slips which show all REA divisions. But it would be a tremendous waste of time to route all minutes through all divisions. Therefore the routing slip is checked for

the divisions to which a particular set of minutes is to go. It also lists the names of individuals who should see the minutes. In spite of this arrangement, a lot of minutes are sent from other offices to the Information Division even though they are not marked for information or any person in the Division. It would save Information Services considerable time if the secretaries in all regional and division offices would refrain from sending us minutes which are not marked for us. (ISD-8)

This suggestion has been put into effect.

Lack of dissemination of information between Technical Standards Division and field personnel. (TSD-5)

It is believed that the problem involved in this suggestion will be solved in part by the digest of activities which the Technical Standards Division plans to issue quarterly for distribution to field and headquarters personnel. Further, better coordination can be attained by alertness on the part of field representatives to include in their reports items which may be helpful to the studies under way in the Technical Standards Division, with care being exercised by reviewers in the Washington office to see that all items of interest to this division are excerpted and forwarded to that division.

Many odd jobs are asked of the division which interrupt work, particularly in regard to installing public address systems. (TSD-4)

Many divisions are asked to do odd jobs which may interrupt their routine activities. In reference to the public address system, it has been determined to return this equipment to the property room of the Administrative Services Division where it will be available to meet the needs of any division.

It is recommended that a uniform system of filing and indexing be instituted in all offices throughout REA. (Engr.-13)

After January 1, all divisions will have this uniform system of filing.

